

Message Text

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UNCLAS BELFAST 355

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, ECON, ELAB, PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: IRISH "GREEN POUND" DEVALUATION DISTURBS NORTH

1. NEWS THAT IRELAND'S "GREEN POUND" HAD BEEN DEVALUED SEVEN AND ONE-HALF PER CENT CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AMONG ULSTER FARMERS AND MEAT PROCESSORS. A DELEGATION FROM THE ULSTER FARMER'S UNION MET AGRICULTURE MINISTER JOHN SILKJIN OCTOBER 6 AND WILL MEET WITH HIM AGAIN TODAY AND THE ULSTER MEAT EXPORTER'S ASSOCIATION AND THE PIG'S MARKETING BOARD WILL MEET MR. JAMES DUNN, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE OCTOBER 7. THE UNION OF SHOP DISTRIBUTIVE AND ALLIED WORKERS (NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE, ICTU) IS SEEKING MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN.

2. AT ISSUE IS DIFFERENTIAL CREATED BETWEEN LIVESTOCK PRICES IN ULSTER AND IN REPUBLIC BY DEVALUATION. IN BEEF PRICES
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DIFFERENTIAL COULD BE AS MUCH AS 25-30 POUNDS STERLING PER

ANIMAL HIGHER IN REPUBLIC AND, FOR HOGS, SIX POUNDS HIGHER THERE. THE INDUSTRY FORESEES AN UPSURGE OF SELLING TO SOUTHERN BUYERS IN NORTHERN MARKETS MEANING INCREASED TRAFFIC, INCLUDING SMUGGLING IN LIVESTOCK FOR PROCESSING IN SOUTHERN PLANTS. NORTHERN TRADE UNIONS AND PROCESSORS ARE CONCERNED BY THE THREAT OF SCARCITY OF SUPPLY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF BUSINESS AND JOBS. THE TRADE UNION ESTIMATES SOME 3000 EMPLOYEES COULD BE LAID-OFF BY PLANT CLOSURES. SMUGGLING ESPECIALLY OF HOGS TO THE SOUTH ("THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME SWINE") IS ALREADY A SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN THE NORTH. THE FARMERS ARE WORRIED THAT CLOSURE OF MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS WILL EVENTUALLY LEAVE THEM WITHOUT A LOCAL MARKET AND VULNERABLE TO "FOREIGN M" MANIPULATIONS.

3. THE POLITICAL ASPECT OF SITUATION IS NOT SO MUCH PROVINCIAL CHAUVINISM DIRECTED AGAINST THE REPUBLIC AS BELIEF THAT ULSTER INTERESTS HAVE BEEN IGNORED FOR DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN. TRADE UNION OFFICIAL HAS SAID THAT BY RESISTING DEVALUATION (OF THE BRITISH GREEN POUND), PRICES TO THE BRITISH HOUSEWIFE WILL BE KEPT DOWN ".....BUT HERE IN ULSTER WE ARE GETTING THE WORST OF BOTH WORLDS. THE CONSUMER WILL SUFFER, THE MEAT PLANTS WILL SUFFER AND WORKERS WILL FACE UNEMPLOYMENT." SPICER

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